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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [VE](#)

SUBJECT: VENEZUELAN LEGISLATIVE AGENDA: SO MUCH TO DO, AND  
SO LITTLE TIME

Classified By: POLITICAL COUNSELOR ABELARDO A. ARIAS FOR REASONS 1.4 (d  
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Summary  
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[1](#)1. (C) The Venezuelan National Assembly plans to pass a number of important laws before the summer recess August 15, according to Movimiento Quinta Republica Deputy Calixto Ortega. Ortega and other deputies cited the National Police Law, the Organized Crime Law, and the Drug Law as priorities this session. The Housing Law was recently passed with opposition support, and a law to regulate municipal government may soon pass with similar support. Also on the agenda are the Land Law, the Armed Forces law, the Foreign Service Law, and the Foreign Exchange Crimes Law. Given the legislative elections due in December, it is unlikely that all of these bills will pass this session. End Summary.

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Legislative Rush Before Elections  
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[1](#)2. (C) The pro-government faction of the National Assembly will push hard to pass as many laws as possible prior to the August 15 summer recess, Movimiento Quinta Republica (MVR) Deputy Calixto Ortega told poloff March 31. Ortega said deputies will be focused on the December legislative elections when the Assembly returns in September, making it unlikely that much will get done in the second half of the year. MVR Deputy Luis Tascon told poloff April 5 the summer recess might be put off to September to allow more time to pass laws. MVR Deputy Cilia Flores, the pro-GOV block leader in the Assembly, told reporters April 19 that the discussion of new laws would be accelerated, and special sessions called on Wednesdays and Fridays, to pass all the priority laws by August. Opposition legislator Pedro Pablo Alcantara (Accion Democratica) told PolCouns that the additional two sessions per week are indeed resulting in expeditions movement of bills in the Assembly.

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National Police Law  
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[1](#)3. (C) Tascon said the priority for the pro-government legislators in this session was the National Police Law. He said the law would be modified from its current version to restrict the responsibilities of the regional and municipal police, and give the to-be-created National Police sole responsibility for preventive policing. Ortega alleged that many regional and municipal police forces continued to act as private militias, and that there could not be overlapping responsibilities among national, regional and municipal police. He said the Internal Politics Commission of the Assembly would rework the National Police Law to address this issue, thus delaying it but not beyond August.

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Organized Crime Law  
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[1](#)4. (C) Ortega said the Organized Crime Law and the Drug Law were also priorities, and would be ready soon. The Organized Crime Law was ready for a floor vote, but was withdrawn when a flaw was detected, according to Ortega. Proyecto Venezuela Deputy Pedro Diaz Blum told poloff April 18 that the Organized Crime Law would be passed in this session as part of a strategy, suggested by Venezuelan Ambassador to the U.S. Bernardo Alvarez, to improve bilateral relations. Tascon also cited the Organized Crime and Drug Laws as priorities, though Flores cited only the Drug Law, and not the Organized Crime Law.

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Opposition Support for Some Laws  
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15. (C) MVR Deputy Roberto Quintero said a number of the laws under consideration this session have opposition support. He cited the recently passed Housing Law, the Municipal Law, the Drug Law, and the Anti-Corruption Law. Diaz Blum also noted that the Housing Law had passed with

opposition support, but called the law "inapplicable". Saady Bijami, opposition Mayor of San Francisco Municipality in Zulia, and President of the Venezuelan Association of Mayors, praised the Municipal Law under consideration for promoting decentralization, in a television interview on April 24. Flores also said the pro-GOV block was committed to passing this law prior to the August 7 municipal elections.

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Land, Guns, and Money  
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16. (C) National Assembly Vice President Ricardo Gutierrez (Podemos), speaking to reporters April 24, predicted that the Assembly would approve the Land Law by April 26. MVR Deputy Eddy Rios April 4 also predicted early passage of the Organic Law of the Armed Forces. Rios asserted that there was opposition agreement on many aspects of this law, while acknowledging that articles on the reserves and national mobilization would generate debate. Movimiento Al Socialismo (MAS) Deputy Pedro Antonio Castillo told polooff April 12 that if the pro-GOV block could not get the two thirds majority needed to pass the law on the military as an organic law, they would simply turn it into an ordinary law. Ortega said the Foreign Exchange Crimes Law would be pushed hard, while insisting that it was aimed at punishing money laundering, not legitimate business.

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What's Not Coming  
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17. (C) Ortega said the Anti-Terrorism Law would probably not be passed in this session. He asserted that the law was potentially dangerous to Venezuelan democracy, and should not be rushed. Ortega said he was worried about passing an abusive law, naming the Patriot Act and the British Anti-Terrorism Law as models to avoid. Ortega also mentioned the Social Security Law as a major priority, but one which would require serious study to evaluate its economic impact on the State and private business, all of which would probably push it beyond this session.

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Comment  
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18. (C) The pro-government legislators have set an ambitious agenda. With their majority, and the additional two sessions per week, they stand a better chance of ramming it through than in the past. The complexity of some of the legislation, especially the bills on the national police and the military, may prove an insurmountable impediment for the time being. These are also bills with significant ramifications which the opposition, though weak, will likely contest strongly. Brownfield